

Appropriations Committee

February 28, 2023

Public Hearing on **H.B. 6659 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, and Making Appropriations Therefor.**

Good morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Karen Wilkie and I am a member of the Independence Center, a program of Mental Health Connecticut in Waterbury CT and I am submitting written testimony on the DMHAS Budget.

Please continue to fund and increase funding for the private non-profit programs, as they are a necessity in our community and others.

The Independence Center has been a godsend to me. Last year, I had spinal surgery and with the support of the staff, I was able to maintain a sense of composure and know that I could heal and recover with this support. They called on a regular basis and delivered food, meals and even a holiday gift. Workshops were offered virtually when they were closed during the pandemic, so we were able to stay connected with staff during that time.

Most recently, I needed help with a housing issue and staff were there to assist and ensure my housing was safe. Not everyone is as fortunate as I to have safe and affordable housing. We need more of it. Lots more.

Staff goes above and beyond to ensure that we have what we need to successfully thrive- not just survive in our community and once again, I am asking you to increase the funding by 9% in FY24 and 7% in FY25 for these essential services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my perspective on the budget.